



Testimony of Jean Horn Caron, AARP Volunteer Leader
On Proposed S.B. 290 and Proposed H.B. 5455
Aging Committee

February 10, 2015

Good Morning Aging Committee Members,

My name is Jean Caron. I am an advocacy volunteer lead with AARP and also a caregiver for my 95-year old mom. Between these two roles I am working full time in my retirement. I am here today to speak in support of the concepts raised in Proposed S.B. 290 & Proposed H.B. 5455 that help family caregivers provide the care to keep their loved ones safe and out of costly institutions. I come here today, not as a medical professional, but as a caregiver.

Three years ago, my mother was in extremely good health and living independently. That was until she had a massive heart attack. She was hospitalized for several weeks. The hospital staff told me to “say goodbye,” but she rallied. After being in a nursing home for a month, she was discharged and living independently again. However, this ordeal had left her considerably weaker, needing a walker and cane to get around.

I remember when my mother left the nursing home. I was given a form that said: “take these meds and see a primary care physician”. I received no instruction on how to perform these tasks, just this one sheet. I was quite anxious since it seemed that so much was suddenly expected of me. This is one of the reasons I support the concepts outlined in Proposed S.B. 290 &

Proposed H.B. 5455. The policy described in these proposals would help family caregivers when their loved ones go into the hospital, by allowing the individual to designate a family caregiver, provide notice to the caregiver before the patient is discharged, and provide family caregivers with the opportunity to receive plain language instruction to support their loved one at home.

Luckily for me, I come from the professional world. As a retired Private Banker, I was not afraid to ask questions. However, even with my legal knowledge, the long term care system proved extremely difficult to navigate. I found myself asking questions, like: “What services does my mother qualify for, what services does she really need?”

Since I received very little guidance upon her discharge, I remember those first few months as harrowing times, and incredibly stressful. The whole process – finances, healthcare – was so overwhelming. I found that my own health was in decline. I remember being rushed to the hospital, thinking I had suffered a massive heart attack. It ended up being a severe case of GERD which, if not properly treated, could easily turn to cancer. I spoke with doctors about this incident. They felt that the GERD was brought on by all the stress I was under. I thought retirement would be “fun.”

At the end of the day, the primary goal is making sure my mother is safe. This starts with basic knowledge around what services she is receiving: whether or not she is being discharged, or transferred to another facility, and why?

People so often forget the caregiver. They are so focused on the person who needs care. Proposed S.B. 290 & Proposed H.B. 5455 provide common sense, no cost solution that will make the big responsibilities family caregivers face a little bit easier—and to help to ease the burden of unnecessary hospital readmissions. Thank you for your attention.

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